

Clutton-Brock J. *A Natural History of Domesticated Mammals*. 2nd ed. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1999. 238 pp. ISBN 0-521-63495-4. Cdn \$61.42

In his delightful collection of essays called "Home Place," my old friend Stan Rowe put it like this: "If the old Genesis story is to be believed, agriculture is the punishment for our sins. In the beginning Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, lost their innocence and incurred the wrath of the Almighty who expelled them from Eden and condemned them in the words of the Bible, to 'till the ground.'"

But, if we believe Juliet Clutton-Brock, and I think we must, we realize that to enjoy the fruits of their toil, Adam and Eve would have had to guard their crop, day and night, against all those local herbivores. Thus, with the beginnings of agriculture, mankind was thrust into an entirely new relationship with his fellow creatures. Did the tedious necessity of crop protection bring the dawn of biotech? Did those first Paleolithic farmers sense the patient acuity of wolves and realize they could be pressed into human service?

Such questions and more are examined in detail in a *Natural History of the Domestic Mammals*. The work has an extensive introduction and 4 subsequent "Sections." The Introduction is a broad overview of the subject, centered around the idea of the "walking larder." This is one of Clutton-Brock's recurrent themes; it encapsulates the obvious fact that dead meat goes bad, but meat on the hoof remains good until needed, even though it must be fed and protected.

Section I is called "Animal Partners" and deals with those species most closely associated with man, the ones described in all standard veterinary anatomy texts. But Clutton-Brock points out that it is not anatomy that counts, it is behavior. All the species in this section are gregarious and nonterritorial, and they all have a strong dominance hierarchy into which humans can insinuate themselves. And unlike the "exploited captives" seen in the next section, they have been profoundly changed by domestication.

The exploited captives include cats, elephants, camels, reindeer, Asiatic cattle, and others: all species that have been altered a little by human contact. Section III deals with small mammals and has a chapter on rabbits and ferrets, and another on the rodents and carnivores kept for food and fur. All those unfinished experiments in domestication are discussed in the final section which has accounts of the cheetah, aquatic mammals, and the more exotic ruminants that are of such interest today.

All this is embellished by neat and skillful drawings in the margin, reproductions of ancient art, and lots of color photographs. And although Clutton-Brock is no Stephen Gould or Jared Diamond, her prose is lucid and straightforward. This is the work of a dedicated scholar. The style of the 2nd edition is much like the first but there are more than 30 new citations, many dealing with DNA evidence that was not available 14 years ago. There are new illustrations, but several old ones have been omitted, particularly those related to apparently unsuccessful attempts to domesticate African antelopes like the eland.

In reading the book, I was struck by the extraordinary variety of relationships between man and animals. Dormice provided the Romans with epicurean delights so hedonistic that they were eventually banned; camels gave their owners all the essentials of life: milk, meat, transport, fuel, clothing, shelter and emergency protection from sand storms; and the cat — who walked by himself — was worshipped and mummified by the thousand. And having an interest in arctic ruminants, I was looking for examples of "domestication" in which animals were allowed to forage freely for much of the year but were convinced — by a suitable reward — to return to the fold when needed by their "owners." I found several, including the camel and the mithan.

Readers will find this a fascinating book, and one of its most striking images is a photograph of a young Kung San woman with a fat baby on her hip. She is there because the Kung never domesticated anything but the dog, not even a plant. The reason: "Why should we when there are so many mongongo nuts in the world?" The Kalahari doesn't look like Eden, but what do I know?

Reviewed by Peter F. Flood, BVSc, MSc, PhD, MRCVS, Professor, Department of Veterinary Biomedical Sciences, Western College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Saskatchewan, 52 Campus Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5B4.

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